BOLLYWOOD'S BOMBS!

Box-office Disasters

Over the years, there have been a very large number of films which are and will be remembered only because they were disasters of the worst kind at the box-office.

Mera Naam Joker, Son Of India, Deedar-E-Yaar, Yaadein... — the common thread that runs through each of them is the fact that they were colossal flops by top filmmakers. Every once in a while comes a film from which everyone — public and the film trade alike — has high expectations. The film seems to have everything going for it — a top banner, big starcast, heavy budget, the works. Then, the film releases... and bombs! It becomes a gamble that doesn't pay off, a slur on the maker's track record and, at times, a joke for the public. In trade parlance, a 'disaster' is a film that entails heavy losses to its distributors. By heavy is meant 50% or more of the investment.

The list of Bollywood's bombs is too long, but here is our pick of some of the most significant disasters in Hindi cinema.

- **LOVE AND GOD** ('86):

The maker of **Mughal-E-Azam**, launched another ambitious project, **Love And God**, way back in the '70s. To be made on a huge canvas, the film was jinxed from the word 'go'. The mega-hyped project suffered its first major setback when producer-director K. Asif died midway through its making. The production was then stalled for some years. When efforts were made to revive it, they failed to bear fruit as the artistes starring in the film began passing away one by one. Meanwhile, other makers who happened to see parts of the film unanimously felt that it would be a major blockbuster if completed and released. Said one, "Yeh picture jitni bani hai utni hi lagaa do to bhi woh saalon-saal chalegi!" But that's easier said than done! In the early '80s, producer-director K.C. Bokadia, riding on the crest of success of his recent hits, decided to complete the jinxed film and release it. His string of previous successes, including **Pyar Jhukta Nahin** and **Teri Meherbaniyan**, emboldened him enough to pump nearly a crore of rupees into the stale and incomplete product. The film had been about 85% ready then. Later, when hero Sanjeev Kumar died in 1985 without completing his dubbing for the film, it seemed that **Love And God** would never see the 'light' of the cinema halls.

– K. Asif

– Biggest debacle

But Bokadia was determined and finally released **Love And God** in '86 — nearly a decade-and-a-half after it was launched. By the time it was released, the hype had been long dead. The passing away of its stars had heavily dented their popularity among the viewing public. It was little wonder then that the cinema halls remained barren. It proved to be a total loss for everyone connected with it, or

whoever survived. Till date, **Love And God** remains the biggest debacle of Indian cinema.

DEEDAR-E-YAAR ('82):

Produced under the home banner of the then popular star Jeetendra, this ambitious Muslim social just stumbled at the opening block. Hit maker H.S. Rawail simply failed to enthuse any life into this love triangle of two friends — Jeetendra and Rishi Kapoor — and one girl — Tina Munim. The film was made before **Himmatwala**, which catapulted the prices of Jeetendra starrers. Yet, at a time when Jeetendra's films used to generally sell for Rs. 20-25 lakh per territory, **Deedar-e-Yaar** came with a price-tag of Rs. 35 lakh! The high price was due to the fact that it was a lavishly-made big set-up.

– H. S. Rawail

– Lavish set-up

The hopes from the film were sky-high. The makers were so confident of the film hitting the bull's-eye that they released it in the middle of the traditionally low-yield period of Navratri and Muharram. However, the public's verdict buried the film. It collected an incredibly low 49% in its first week in Bombay, a debacle from the first show itself! By the time the film went into its second week, it was pronounced a supreme disaster. Several attempts have been made over the years to re-release the film at individual venues here and there, but each time has met with a similar fate. In fact, the film has run into deficit wherever screened, leading to a standing joke in the film trade that **Deedar-e-Yaar** is the only film in the history of Indian cinema whose total business grows(?) lesser each year!

– Jeetendra

RAZIA SULTAN ('83):

The name Kamal Amrohi needed no introduction when he launched Razia Sultan with Dharmendra and Hema Malini in the lead. The maker of such stupendous hits like **Mahal** and **Pakeezah**, Amrohi's name had become synonymous with mega productions. Part fiction-part historical, **Razia Sultan** was made on a lavish scale, with Amrohi leaving no stone unturned to achieve the highest degree of authenticity in the film. The costume drama seemed to have every ingredient required for a blockbuster — a top-notch director, a popular lead pair, a very good script- writer, great music by Khayyam, very high production values and so on. Against these, there was only one factor on the negative side — Kamal Amrohi's leisurely attitude in completing the film. **Pakeezah** too had taken him twelve long years to make, but it ultimately turned out to be a super-hit.

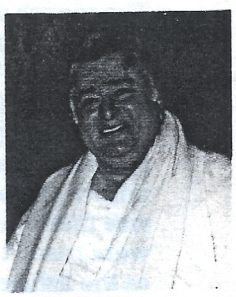
– Kamal Amrohi

– No. 1 hit pair?

However, the long delay, which didn't affect **Pakeezah**, sounded the death-knell for **Razia Sultan** as this one factor swallowed up every high point of the film. Result: It bombed on release. The notion that the public can sniff a stale product was proved once again with audiences distancing themselves from **Razia Sultan**. Moreover, over the decade that was spent in its making, people's tastes had changed. The popularity of the once No. 1 pair of Dharam-Hema was also on the decline. The music, though excellent, failed to pick up because the film was rejected outright. Some of the songs from the film are, however, remembered even today. Who can forget Asha Bhosle's superb rendition of **'Ae dil-e-naadaan'**?

AJOOBA ('91):

Producer-director Shashi Kapoor collaborated with Gorky Studios of Moscow (then USSR) to produce India's first mega-budget fantasy film with magical special effects. One of the biggest multi-starrers ever produced on Hindi screen, the film's cast read like a 'Who's Who' of the film industry. It starred Amitabh Bachchan, Rishi Kapoor, Dimple Kapadia, Sonam, Dara Singh and a horde of other Hindi and Russian artistes in a



– Shashi Kapoor